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TAGS: [KGIC](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MCAP](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR U/S JOSEPH'S VISIT TO MOROCCO

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas T. Riley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The U.S. Mission warmly welcomes your upcoming visit to Morocco. Your visit as co-chair of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GI) comes as the U.S. and the Moroccan government are further energizing our bilateral relations. Since the May 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca, Morocco has strengthened its commitment to fight global terrorism and promote widespread reform, and cooperation with the USG on both of these fronts is excellent. Morocco is a valuable ally in international forums; the Guatemalans recently told U/S Burns that the Moroccans were actively supporting them against Venezuela for the UNSC seat. Your visit will reinforce our relationship, while also enhancing Morocco's profile on multilateral international security.

Global Initiative

¶2. (C) Morocco was honored that the U.S. and Russia asked it to host the first GI meeting. The GOM was particularly glad that it was accorded observer status for the meeting, allowing Morocco to make a fully informed decision when it is asked to be the first country to join the GI after the twelve Initial Partner Nations. Should Morocco accept, you may want to use this opportunity to praise Morocco on the active role it plays on issues of critical importance to international security and convey our strong desire to work closely with the GOM on the Board of Governors as we face challenges from Iran and North Korea.

Non-Proliferation, Energy and NATO

¶3. (C) Since its accession to the IAEA in 1957, Morocco has continuously worked to strengthen non-proliferation efforts, ensure compliance with nuclear safety and security standards, and promote the use of nuclear energy for peaceful use. In 2004, Morocco concluded the Additional Protocol to its Safeguard Agreement with the IAEA. Morocco plays an active role, regionally, in promoting scientific and technical cooperation, and continues to be a stabilizing force on

disarmament topics within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). As a newly seated IAEA Board of Governors member, Morocco will follow its track record of strong support on key non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives, but will continue to argue that the right of all countries to peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be protected, recently evidenced by its repeated request to include language on this point in the GI Statement of Principles.

¶4. (SBU) Given its burgeoning demand for electricity, Morocco is considering plans to develop a nuclear power plant to meet its energy demands and is exploring options with the full range of possible international suppliers. During President Putin's September visit to Morocco, press rumors circulated about Russia's interest in the project, sparked by a press statement from a Russian firm expressing its intention to bid on any tender by the Moroccan government for a nuclear power plant. Separate press reports indicated that senior Moroccan energy officials traveled to Russia in August to discuss Morocco's nuclear energy plans.

¶5. (SBU) Morocco is prepared to play a more active role in NATO, specifically in the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD). On April 7, Morocco hosted a high-level NATO event that united, for the first time, NATO Allies and MD partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia) in a MD country. This was the first time the North Atlantic Council had met outside a NATO country. The event also highlighted Morocco's extensive participation in international peacekeeping. (NB: Morocco is currently involved in five peacekeeping missions throughout the world - Kosovo, Bosnia, Congo, Ivory Coast, and Haiti.)

Supporting Reform

¶6. (C) Morocco is a regional leader in reform, and the Moroccan leadership views reform and religious tolerance as essential components of the battle against extremism and terrorism. Morocco is pressing internal reform on all fronts: political, with legislation to reform Moroccan political parties and electoral code; in women's rights, through implementation of a new family code that boosts the rights of women and children; in the media, with perhaps the freest press in the Arab world; in the economy, with reform-fed growth and a recent Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.; and, in the religious field, where Morocco's Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs is restructuring mosques and Islamic education to promote tolerance and moderation. Despite the GOM's efforts, however, we hear persistent concerns that change is not happening fast enough and that reform is almost entirely driven top down from the Palace. Morocco has not moved forward with its stated intention to decriminalize libel. Over the longer term, constitutional reform will be necessary to strengthen the role of parliament and democratically elected officials.

¶7. (SBU) The USG actively supports many of Morocco's reform efforts, including through direct funding. Morocco is a major recipient of funding through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), economic support funds, and development assistance. In FY 2006, USAID programs faced a significant reduction from the years after the 2003 bombings. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is currently considering assistance of up to \$700 million over five years. On the military side, however, potential FMF cuts in FY 2008 would hamper Morocco's and our own efforts to sustain the large stock of U.S.-origin military equipment that remains a backbone of their holdings.

Middle East: the Palestinians, Iraq, Iran

¶8. (C) Morocco continues to be a moderating voice in the Middle East. This year the GOM welcomed Mahmoud Abbas but refused a proposed high-level Hamas visit. King Mohammed met

with Shimon Peres in Madrid last year. However, the Israeli liaison office in Rabat, closed during the second intifada, remains shuttered. The recent fighting in Lebanon has had very negative effects on public opinion toward both Israel and the U.S.

¶9. (C) The Government of Morocco continues to play a discreet but supportive role in Iraq. Morocco has welcomed some key events in Iraq, but is inconsistent in publicly supporting major political developments. Two employees of the Moroccan Embassy in Baghdad were kidnapped last October - a case that remains unresolved.

¶10. (C) Iranian Vice President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Musavi visited Morocco in early January and was received by PM Jettou, who told him that Iran must comply with international law and non-proliferation conventions. Moroccans vocally support the right of Iran to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but also support U.S. efforts to deal with the issue multilaterally, believing another military confrontation must be avoided at all costs. The GOM is also concerned about Iranian "meddling" in Iraq.

Western Sahara and Algeria

¶11. (C) Morocco's relations with Algeria are sour with no immediate prospects for improvement. The Western Sahara issue remains a key obstacle in improving relations; a majority of the Moroccan army is deployed there. Algeria continues to insist on a solution that allows for self-determination with an option for independence. Morocco insists the territory is an integral part of the Kingdom and rejects any option that allows for the possibility of independence. The American military observers in MINURSO, the peacekeeping force in the territory, departed in 2003. The U.S. facilitated in August 2005 the release of the remaining 404 POWs held by the Polisario, with tremendous positive public diplomacy impact. The Sahara remains a primary topic of discussion, particularly since a decision in July 2006 to encourage Morocco to produce a credible autonomy plan as a basis for negotiations leading to an agreed political settlement.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

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